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Programme planning

Report on the activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

Strengthening the role of evaluation and the application of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

"Information from evaluations is used for a variety of important purposes, though evaluation has yet to become a fully accepted management function"

Summary

The present report is the eleventh in a series of studies that have been submitted biennially since 1988 to the General Assembly through the Committee for Programme and Coordination, under regulation 7.4 of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation. It is intended to:

- Review the current state of evaluation in the United Nations Secretariat;[a]
- Provide a summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations of evaluation reports completed in the biennium 2008-2009;
- Assess the quality of 2008-2009 self-evaluation reports that the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) received from programmes;
- Examine the application of evaluation to programme design, delivery and policy directives in the United Nations Secretariat;
- Present the evaluation workplan for OIOS for 2012-2013.

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Evaluation in the biennium 2008-2009 continued to focus on issues of programme implementation, outputs and outcomes and was guided predominantly by the criterion of effectiveness in assessing performance. The present report shows how evaluation contributed to improving programme activities and making the Organization more efficient.

All programmes engaged in evaluation activities. Overall, the quality of self-evaluation reports was satisfactory, though quality varied widely throughout the programmes. Resources for evaluation in 2010-2011 declined compared with the previous biennium and remain below the recommended benchmark.

While the existence of evaluation policies had beneficial effects on evaluation capacity and quality, despite progress in some areas, evaluation has yet to become a fully accepted management function. The expected accomplishment and related target on self-evaluation was removed from the 2010 compacts of senior managers with the Secretary-General.

In the report, OIOS presents the workplan for the central evaluation function. The Office also reports on its follow-up to recommendations received from the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its forty-ninth session, proposes action to improve the quality of evaluation reports and poses a question for the Committee to consider.

[a] For this study, "United Nations Secretariat" refers to the 31 programmes within the mandate of OIOS. See annex I for a complete list.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report represents the eleventh in a series of studies that the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) has submitted biennially since 1988 to the General Assembly through the Committee for Programme and Coordination in accordance with the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation (ST/SGB/2000/8). Secretariat departments reviewed a draft of the report, and their comments are incorporated as appropriate.

2. This study has five objectives:

(a) To review the current state of evaluation in the United Nations Secretariat;[1]

(b) To provide a summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations of evaluation reports completed in the biennium 2008-2009;

(c) To assess the quality of 2008-2009 self-evaluation reports that OIOS received from programmes, as recommended by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its forty-ninth session (A/64/16, para. 42);

(d) To examine the application of evaluation to programme design, delivery and policy directives in the United Nations Secretariat;

(e) To present the evaluation workplan for OIOS for 2012-2013.

II. Methodology

3. In order to determine the extent and quality of evaluation activities in the United Nations Secretariat in the biennium 2008-2009, internal and external evaluation reports were extracted from the Integrated Documentation and Monitoring Information System (IMDIS), following which, OIOS requested from programmes copies of additional evaluation reports finalized during the biennium. O'OS reviewed all 279 reports received to establish whether they corresponded to its operational definition of evaluation.

4. OIOS defines evaluation as a systematic and discrete process, as objective as possible, to determine the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and/or sustainability of any element of a programme's performance relative to its mandate or goals. Evaluation can be used for accountability, learning and/or decision-making purposes. An evaluation report should contain a description of the objective(s) of the evaluation, methodology(ies) used, evidence-based findings, conclusions and recommendations (where applicable). Of the 279 reports, 155 reports met those criteria. Annex I lists the evaluation reports by programme. Evaluations by OIOS are excluded from the list; they are reported separately in section III.F below.

[1] For this study, "United Nations Secretariat" refers to the 31 programmes within the mandate of OIOS. See annex I for a complete list.

5. Of the 155 evaluation reports, a purposive sample of 71 was created for examining report attributes (i.e., scope, objectives, categories of findings, conclusions and recommendations). The sample includes, at most, five reports per programme. When a programme produced more than five, reports were selected so that the sample had:

(a) Nearly half from each year of the biennium;

(b) A balance in terms of midterm versus final evaluations;

(c) A mix of evaluations at the project, subprogramme, programme and other levels;

(d) A balanced mix of topics;

(e) Widespread geographic coverage.

6. Another sample, amounting to 45 of the 71 reports in the attributes sample, was created to assess report quality, using 27 standards.[2] Between two and four evaluation reports per programme were assessed, depending on the number of evaluations the programme completed. The criteria listed above were applied; however, the quality assessment sample excluded reports shorter than 11 pages (since an initial perusal of reports suggested they lacked a critical mass of material to review). Thus, all reports of the Department of Management, the Department of Political Affairs, the Office of Legal Affairs, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa and the United Nations Office at Geneva were excluded on that basis. For the quality assessment to be as impartial as possible, OIOS contracted with an independent evaluation expert to examine and assess the reports.

7. OIOS also created a non-random sample of 42 of the 71 reports to examine findings, conclusions and recommendations in the eight strategic priority areas of the Organization.[3]

8. To further ascertain evaluation practices, OIOS conducted a web-based survey of all focal points representing the 31 programmes in the study scope. The survey, undertaken between 19 November 2010 and 6 January 2011, had a response rate of 100 per cent. OIOS also analysed secondary data sources, including evaluation plans for the biennium, reports of the OIOS on monitoring and evaluation practices in seven Secretariat departments and information on the implementation of the recommendations emanating from the OIOS assessment of evaluation capacities and needs in the United Nations Secretariat (Inspection and Evaluation Division report No. IED-2006-006).

[2] These standards are a subset of 42 comprehensive standards developed in 2009 to assess the quality of OIOS Inspection and Evaluation Division evaluation reports. The standards were developed using a number of sources, including the United Nations Evaluation Group Standards for Evaluation in the United Nations System, Inspection and Evaluation Division internal criteria, the World Bank and the United States Agency for International Development.

[3] These eight areas are identified in paragraph 9 of General Assembly resolution 61/254. Evaluation reports of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, the Department of Management, the Department of Public Information and the United Nations Office at Geneva were not included in this sample as those departments are supporting work in all eight areas.

9. A key limitation of the present study is that OIOS may not have received all evaluation reports finalized during the biennium 2008-2009. Though OIOS identified Secretariat evaluation reports in IMDIS and provided focal points with guidance on submitting evaluation reports, OIOS may not have obtained all reports. Further, the non-randomness of the sampling processes and relatively small sample sizes limit the extent to which sample-based findings can be generalized to the entire Secretariat. When possible, triangulation was used to verify results.

III. Study results

A. Scope and focus of evaluations in 2008-2009

10. All Secretariat programmes undertook evaluation activity during the biennium. Twenty-two focal points reported that their programmes had completed external and internal evaluations. Five programmes had undergone only external evaluations, which were managed and conducted by outside entities such as the Joint Inspection Unit and OIOS.[4] Another five programmes had undertaken only internal evaluations, which were managed and/or conducted by the programmes.[5]

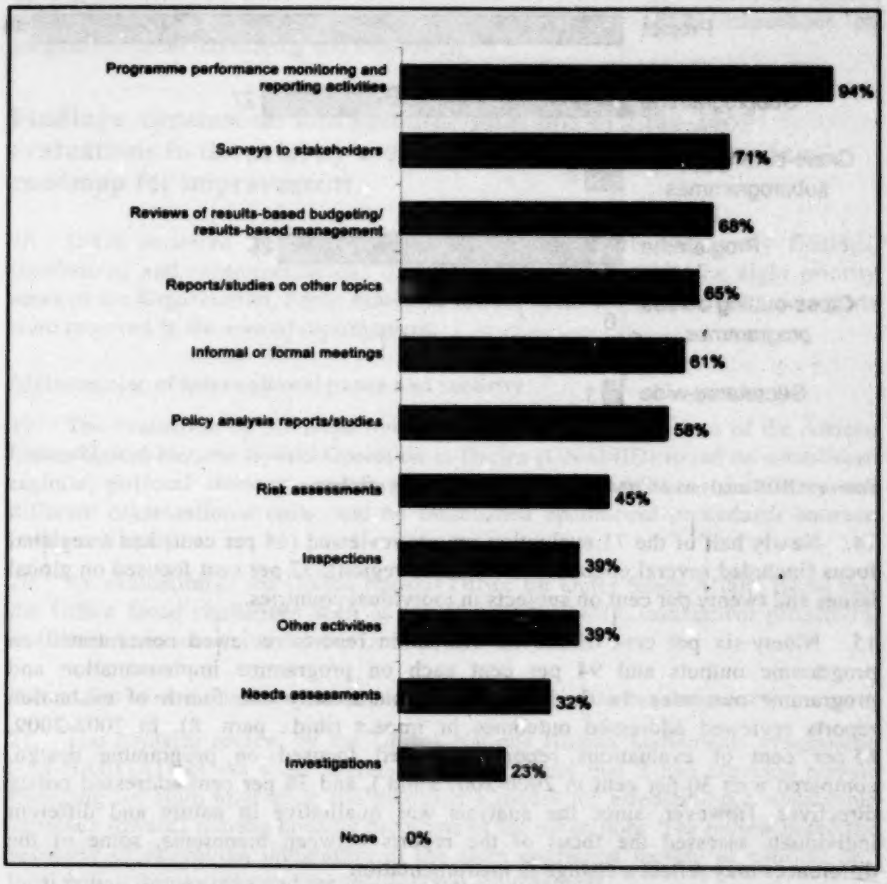
11. Compared to the previous biennium, evaluations have been more dispersed throughout the Secretariat. Previously, five programmes accounted for 65 per cent of all evaluation reports (see A/64/63, para. 45), whereas in 2008-2009 the top five programmes accounted for only 46 per cent.

12. Figure I shows a wide range of other evaluative activities carried out in addition to external and internal evaluations. OIOS defines "other evaluative activities" as any activities other than evaluations (as defined in para. 4 above) that are conducted with the intention of collecting data to assess or determine programme or organizational performance and make decisions for programme planning and implementation, accountability and/or learning.

[4] The Department of Management, the Department of Safety and Security, the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, the Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and the United Nations Office at Nairobi.

[5] The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Department of Field Support, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of Legal Affairs and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT).

Figure I
Percentage of programmes carrying out other evaluative activities in 2008-2009



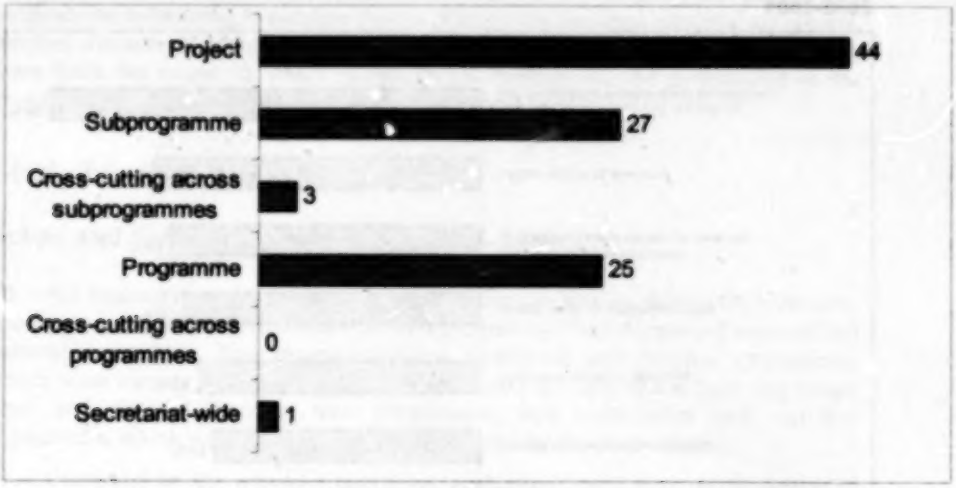
Note: "Other activities" include external United Nations Evaluation Group peer review, internal reviews, lessons learned exercises, self-assessment initiatives, etc.
Source: OIOS survey of programme focal points.

Evaluations in 2008-2009 concentrated on issues of programme implementation, outputs and outcomes, many at the project level

13. Nearly three quarters of the 71 evaluations reviewed addressed matters below the level of programme or department (figure II). Most commonly, evaluation was at the project level (44 per cent).[6] In the previous biennium, 43 per cent of reports reviewed targeted the project level (see A/64/63, para. 7).

[6] This conforms to rule 107.3 (b) of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation.

Figure II
Scope of 2008-2009 evaluations (percentage)



Source: OIOS analysis of 2008-2009 evaluation report attributes.

14. Nearly half of the 71 evaluation reports reviewed (44 per cent) had a regional focus (included several countries in the same region), 37 per cent focused on global issues and twenty per cent on subjects in individual countries.

15. Ninety-six per cent of the 71 evaluation reports reviewed concentrated on programme outputs and 94 per cent each on programme implementation and programme outcomes. In the previous biennium, only one fourth of evaluation reports reviewed addressed outcomes or impact (ibid., para. 8). In 2008-2009, 85 per cent of evaluations reports reviewed focused on programme design, compared with 30 per cent in 2006-2007 (ibid.), and 38 per cent addressed policy directives. However, since the analysis was qualitative in nature and different individuals assessed the focus of the reports between bienniums, some of the differences may reflect a change in instrumentation.

16. With respect to the criteria against which to assess performance in 2008-2009, the criterion of effectiveness guided all evaluations reviewed — an increase of 5 percentage points since the previous biennium. Further, in 2008-2009, 93 per cent of evaluations used impact as a criterion.[7] The proportion of evaluations that used efficiency increased from 73 per cent previously (A/64/63, para. 9) to 99 per cent in 2008-2009. Relevance was used by 89 per cent of evaluations — a substantial increase from the 59 per cent witnessed in 2006-2007 (ibid.). Eighty-five per cent of 2008-2009 evaluations reviewed used the criterion of sustainability to assess performance.

17. Generally, in 2008-2009, programme-level evaluation operated within the framework established by the intergovernmental bodies. However, the evaluation reports did not appear to have supported the implementation of Secretariat-wide

[7] This conforms to rule 107.3 (c) of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation.

mandates on gender equality and human rights. Only 9 (13 per cent) of the 71 evaluation reports reviewed referred to gender aspects in their methodology, findings, conclusions and/or recommendations. Even fewer (7) mentioned human rights issues. This finding concurs with results from OIOS inspections on programme-level monitoring and evaluation.[8]

B. Findings, conclusions and recommendations of 2008-2009 evaluations in the priority areas of the Organization provide a roadmap for improvement

18. OIOS reviewed the sample of 42 evaluation reports to identify findings, conclusions and recommendations of 2008-2009 evaluations in the eight priority areas of the Organization. Some examples follow. It should be noted that no reports were received in the area of disarmament.

Maintenance of international peace and security

19. The evaluation by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the African Union/United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) found no established regional political strategy; undefined roles and responsibilities of military and different organizational units; and no established operational procedures between police and military.

20. An evaluation of the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs found that the Office faced challenges such as insufficient visibility, insufficient proactivity and limited connection within the United Nations system.

Promotion of sustained economic growth and sustainable development

21. The midterm review by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) of the slum upgrading facility found that it had attracted private financing for slum upgrading and provided a model for establishing a sustainable approach towards solving housing problems of the urban poor. The review noted the necessity of improving integration of the slum upgrading facility in national and local policy frameworks and the institutional environment.

22. The evaluation by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) of the development and formalization of the trans-Asian railway programme noted its importance for landlocked developing countries. Constructing new routes, realigning existing routes and revising technical standards would contribute to the programme's sustainability.

23. The evaluation by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) of the United Nations Global Environment Monitoring System Water Programme found that it had accomplished the majority of its tasks. Its main challenge was to ensure

[8] See Inspection and Evaluation Division inspection reports on monitoring and evaluation in the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (IED-09-006, paras. 15-16); the Department of Management (IED-10-002, paras. 25-26); the Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Department of Field Support (IED-10-001, paras. 42-44); the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (IED-10-010, paras. 38-40); and the Department of Safety and Security (IED-11-001, paras. 57-67).

adequate sustained funding to continue the programme so that 35 additional developing countries could actively participate.

Development for Africa

24. The evaluation by the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on "Africa's development needs: state of implementation of various commitments, challenges and the way forward" showed that it gave participants an opportunity to renew their commitments to Africa's development and address challenges.

Promotion of human rights

25. An evaluation by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) of an initiative to strengthen the implementation of human rights treaty recommendations found that its impact and effectiveness relied mainly on the role of national actors and cooperation with external bodies. The initiative's global and specific objectives were clear, feasible and interrelated, and external and internal monitoring tools were improved. Challenges included a lack of financial sustainability, delays caused by understaffing and resource constraints, and undefined internal roles and responsibilities.

Effective coordination of humanitarian assistance efforts

26. The evaluation of efforts by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to prevent and respond to human trafficking found that its established policy on trafficking did not address prevention issues in detail. It found inconsistencies in policy implementation among offices, a lack of training and outdated reference materials. Additionally, representatives from several international organizations and international non-governmental organizations felt there was unrealized potential for cooperation between them and UNHCR.

27. The evaluation by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of its response to Cyclone Nargis found that the overall humanitarian response was favourable — there was extensive coverage of food, shelter, health care and other vital sectors. However, weaknesses were found in specific areas, including coordination between clusters. The report recommended that the Office improve its communication and consultation with affected communities after disaster strikes.

28. The evaluation by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) described its health programme as a "well-oiled engine of comprehensive primary health care", which could provide broader services and better utilize its existing resources. More funding and improved tools for budgeting and financial management were needed for sustainability.

Promotion of justice and international law

29. Participants in the Office of Legal Affairs/United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) regional capacity-building workshop on treaty law and practice and the domestic implementation of treaty obligations evaluated it positively. Women comprised nearly half of the 36 participants. Overall, participants were satisfied with the speakers, information and materials and appreciated the

opportunity to network with regional participants and United Nations experts. The evaluation provided specific suggestions for improving future workshops.

Drug control, crime prevention and combating international terrorism in all its forms and manifestations

30. The evaluation by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime of its programme on counselling and treatment of women with substance abuse problems in Pakistan found it met most of its objectives. The design and delivery of the programme showed transparent and efficient use of its resources, as well as demonstrated professionalism and commitment. The programme also contributed extensive knowledge on substance abuse. Demand for the programme exceeded expectations. Long-term funding for the programme should be secured to increase sustainability.

C. Overall quality of internal evaluation reports was satisfactory but varied widely between and within programmes

31. On average, the overall quality of the assessed evaluation reports was fair — the midpoint of a 5-point scale, reflecting a possible range in quality from excellent (1) to very poor (5). Quality varied significantly between and within programmes. Sixteen per cent of reports were rated as excellent, while 20 per cent were of poor quality. Quality depended in part on the scope of the evaluation and resources available. Some reports were full-fledged evaluation reports, while others were quite limited (e.g., presenting results of a survey of meeting participants). Reports of high and low quality were spread fairly evenly among programmes. Six programmes accounted for the seven reports rated "excellent". Another six programmes accounted for the nine reports rated "poor".

32. On average, the quality of the introductions, methodologies, background, findings and the format of the evaluation reports were rated "good". However, there were specific common weaknesses. Report authors often did not address the rationale for selecting data or explain data collection and analysis methods used. The reports' coverage of methodological challenges and/or limitations and the reliability and validity of the findings was weak.

33. Many findings were considered to be too descriptive and narrative. Often, key findings did not clearly emerge from reports. Many reports presented evidence (figures and opinions) without appropriately aggregating and synthesizing it. While some reports presented copious evidence to support findings, others presented evidence very selectively or only in annexes. Some findings were superficially supported by limited evidence (e.g., one interview).

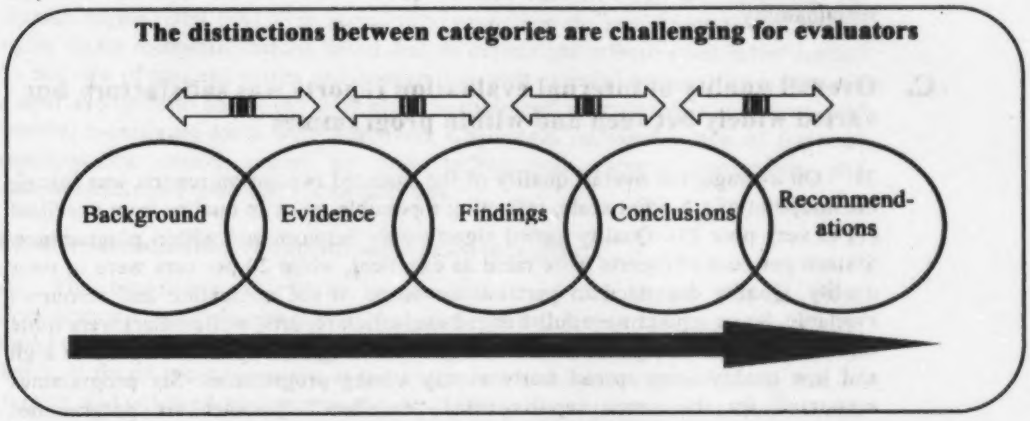
34. Depth of analysis also varied considerably. At times, elements in the findings expressed the evaluators' unsubstantiated opinion(s). In some cases, findings seemed unsupported by adequate reflection of the meaning(s) and implications of facts. Some reports did not explain the underlying causes of occurrences or change.

35. On average, the quality of executive summaries, conclusions and recommendations were rated as "fair". Conclusions represented the weakest element of the reports assessed: some reports had no conclusions, others contained conclusions which essentially summarized findings and added little value.

36. The reports were challenged in conceptually distinguishing between background information and evidence; evidence and findings; and especially, findings and conclusions. While acknowledging these categories do not always have sharp distinctions (see fig. III), high-quality evaluation reports are clear in conceptualizing these reporting aspects.

37. While some reports provided too many recommendations that were too prescriptive, others offered only a few very short recommendations that did not seem to be the result of a systematic analysis of all the findings and conclusions. Recommendations should be actionable and at appropriate strategic levels.

Figure III



D. Evaluation serves a variety of important purposes

38. All 71 evaluation reports reviewed contained findings and conclusions on programme implementation. Findings on programme outputs, programme results, outcomes and impact were all represented in 97 per cent of the reports. Eighty-nine per cent of the 2008-2009 evaluation reports reviewed included findings on programme design, whereas findings on policy directives were represented in less than half of the reports reviewed (45 per cent). Policy questions, in general, are broader than those addressing implementation processes or delivery of specific outputs and thus may occur less frequently in evaluations.

39. Similar patterns emerged when considering the recommendations made in the reports. Nearly all reports reviewed contained recommendations on programme outputs and programme implementation. Recommendations on results, outcomes and impact were found in 90 per cent of reports reviewed and on programme design in 86 per cent. However, less than half (45 per cent) of the reports reviewed included recommendations on policy directives.

40. The focal point survey results supported these findings. Sixty-five per cent of respondents indicated that in their programme, evaluation reports are used for improvement of the current programme. In 62 per cent of programmes, evaluation information was used for learning for future programmes and/or budget planning. Nearly half (48 per cent) used evaluation reports for policy decisions, while only

10 per cent used them for developing public outreach or media materials. Sixty-two per cent of programmes used evaluation information in reporting to higher levels of management and 55 and 39 per cent, respectively, used the information for reporting to intergovernmental bodies and donors.

41. Considering consequences resulting from 2008-2009 evaluation reports, the same focus on current programme implementation prevailed. The most frequently mentioned consequence, by 55 per cent of respondents, was that the reports resulted in better informed, effective and relevant decision-making on current programme implementation. Mentioned second (by 52 per cent) was improved organizational/operational efficiency. Only 45 per cent indicated improved programme performance (effectiveness) and even fewer (29 per cent) mentioned changes in policies as consequences emanating from evaluation reports.

42. Focal points cited the following consequences emanating from specific 2008-2009 evaluation reports in the areas of programme activities, programme management and evaluation methodology:

(a) The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management promulgated various statistical methodologies to other duty stations (the United Nations Office at Geneva, the United Nations Office at Vienna and the United Nations Office at Nairobi) based on successful experience at United Nations Headquarters. The survey for intergovernmental bodies was standardized across all Department duty stations;

(b) The Department of Political Affairs reported significant strengthening of the Department through multi-year regular budget proposals using evaluation findings as the basis for analysis;

(c) In the Department of Public Information, departmental evaluations have consistently underlined the importance of a more interactive presence online (e.g., the 2008 annual programme impact review on the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 2009 annual programme impact review on the redesign of the United Nations website). The Department responded by initiating efforts to change website usage policies which had limited interactivity and systematically incorporating social media tools in communications planning to promote interactivity, which the main United Nations website could not provide;

(d) In the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), evaluation helped promote a results-based management culture through greater involvement of programme managers. Evaluation activities also improved programme/project articulation and focus (e.g., in the case of Development Account projects) and synergies with the overall programme of work;

(e) In the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), evaluation results were used to make the work of the Subregional Office in the Caribbean more relevant. Actions to better document the results and impacts of the Commission's work have allowed it to become more focused and effective;

(f) ESCAP made a strategic shift to a "programme approach" in planning for the 2012-13 programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013 by placing greater emphasis on capacity development approaches and integrating extrabudgetary and regular budget work as a direct result of recommendations of evaluative exercises;

(g) The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs found that inter-agency real time evaluations helped to support learning in the field, improve humanitarian operations and resolve coordination bottlenecks. The Central Emergency Response Fund evaluation was used to improve the operations of the Fund and to further establish its credibility among donors. The 2009 Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs meta evaluation was used to design the OCHA strategic plan for Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs 2010-2013;

(h) OHCHR noted that evaluation activities helped it improve work processes and form new policies on gender and on regional offices. Evaluation also resulted in more information sharing and coherence between various parts of OHCHR, fewer and more focused strategic priorities and improved partnerships in the humanitarian context;

(i) In the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, a recommendation on streamlining and consolidating inter-agency coordination efforts helped the Office to continue to make the inter-agency consultative meetings a regular feature of its work programme;

(j) In some areas of the Office of Legal Affairs, evaluation helped the strategic frameworks for 2010-2011 and 2012-2013 improve;

(k) Focusing of results as described in the UN-Habitat medium-term strategic and institutional plan resulted in increased interdivisional collaboration;

(l) In UNEP, the evaluation recommendation compliance system provides a direct link to performance improvement. The Evaluation Office compiles compliance information by UNEP divisions, which is used by the Executive Director as a performance measure of division directors;

(m) In UNHCR, an evaluation report was the basis of a workshop for UNHCR and partners to reorient the programme. Another report informed the executive decision to overhaul the organization structure. As a result, a stronger Supply Chain Management Service was created and moved from Geneva to Budapest.

E. Overview of Secretariat programme-level evaluation practice and capacity

Resources for evaluation in the Secretariat have stagnated

43. The OIOS 2007 assessment of evaluation capacities and needs in the United Nations Secretariat found inadequate evaluation capacity at the central, programme and subprogramme levels owing to insufficient financial and staffing resources, uneven competencies, and a lack of senior leadership support.[9]

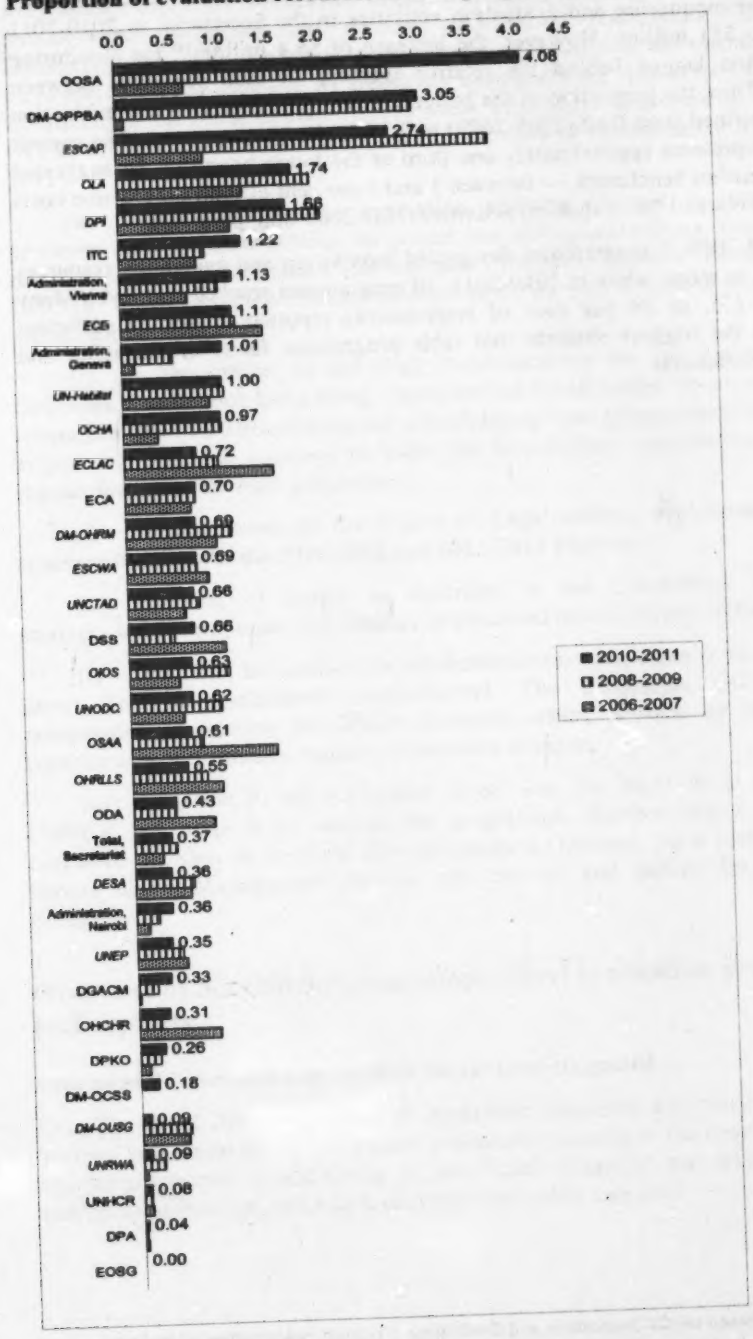
[9] A/64/63, para. 43; see also assessment of evaluation capacities and needs in the United Nations Secretariat (IED-2006-006).

44. Budgets for evaluation continue to be low. The improvement experienced in 2008-2009 was not maintained in the 2010-2011 biennium (see fig. IV). Resources identified for monitoring and evaluation activities in the Secretariat in 2010-2011 amounted to $51 million. However, the increase of $6.4 million[10] for monitoring and evaluation lagged behind the relative increase in total resources between bienniums. Thus, the proportion of the budget devoted to monitoring and evaluation resources declined from 0.42 (2008-2009) to 0.37 (2010-2011) per cent. The current proportion represents approximately one third of the lower bound of the suggested general evaluation benchmark — between 1 and 3 per cent of total programme costs should be earmarked for evaluation activities (IED-2006-006, para. 30).

45. In 2008-2009, 9 programmes designated monitoring and evaluation resources of 1 per cent or more, while in 2010-2011, 10 programmes reached that level. Many focal points (15, or 56 per cent of respondents) reported a lack of sufficient resources as the biggest obstacle that their programme faced in managing and conducting evaluations.

[10] These figures are based on the Inspection and Evaluation Division examination of budget fascicles for individual programmes and differ from those presented in A/64/6 (Introduction), para. 61.

Figure IV
Proportion of evaluation resources to total programme resources (percentage)



(Notes on following page)

(Notes to Figure IV)

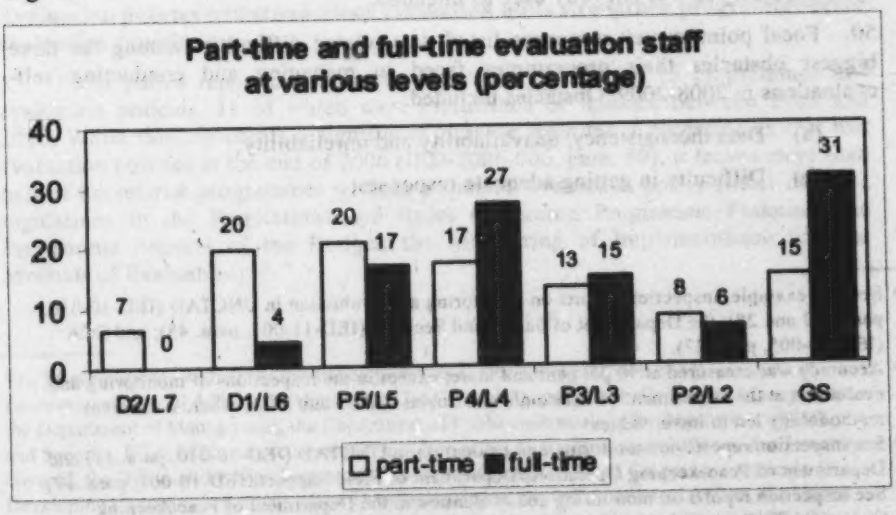
Note: Italics indicate programmes that experienced a decline in evaluation resources as a proportion of total budget between the 2008-2009 and 2010-2011 periods.

Abbreviations: DESA, Department of Economic and Social Affairs; DGACM, Department for General Assembly and Conference Management; DM, Department of Management; DPA, Department of Political Affairs; DPI, Department of Public Information; DPKO, Department of Peacekeeping Operations; DSS, Department of Safety and Security; EOSG, Executive Office of the Secretary-General; ITC, International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO; OCHA, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; OCSS, Office of Central Support Services; ODA, Office for Disarmament Affairs; OHRM, Office of Human Resources Management; OLA, Office of Legal Affairs; OOSA, Office for Outer Space Affairs; OPPBA, Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts; OSAA, Office of the Special Adviser on Africa; OHRLLS, Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States; OUSG, Office of the Under-Secretary-General; UNODC, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

Source: OIOS analysis of budget fascicles for 2010-2011, 2008-2009, 2006-2007 (A/64/6, A/62/6 and A/60/6).

46. While 5 programmes (the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Department of Management, the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, the United Nations Office at Geneva and the United Nations Office at Nairobi) reported no staff dedicated to evaluation activities, other programmes indicated that between 1 and 49 staff conducted and/or managed evaluations. In total, 170 staff in the Secretariat undertook evaluation activities, though 122 did so as a part-time function. Only 11 programmes had exclusively full-time evaluation staff. Usually, these programmes had stand-alone evaluation units. Two programmes employed full and part-time staff, while in 13 programmes all staff working on evaluations had other duties. Figure 5 shows the distribution of part-time and full-time evaluation staff by post level.

Figure V



Source: OIOS survey of programme focal points.

The implementation of evaluation plans is not assured

47. In the assessments of the 2009 compacts of 23 senior managers with the Secretary-General, the achievement of the target "self-evaluation plans implemented" was judged "satisfactory" for 78 per cent. However, the compacts and the 2008-2009 programme evaluation plans showed substantial differences with respect to the degree of detail presented.

48. The expected accomplishment "effective self-evaluation of all programmes and subprogrammes on a regular basis" is no longer part of the 2010 senior managers' compacts with the Secretary-General. This raises concerns, since only 42 per cent of focal points reported that their departments established "formal tracking and/or monitoring of the (biennial) evaluation plan". OIOS inspections of programme-level monitoring and evaluation further found that the job descriptions of managers do not systematically include monitoring and evaluation functions.[11]

Programme-level evaluation faces multiple challenges

49. Inspections of programme-level monitoring and evaluation showed highly accurate reporting of output delivery for the Secretary-General's biennial programme performance report.[12] However, programmes confronted significant challenges in reporting on the results achieved with the outputs thus delivered. For all programmes, the General Assembly established indicators of achievement to be used to measure the degree of achievement at the end of the budget period. Among programmes inspected so far, between 11 and 44 per cent of data that programmes needed to collect to measure their indicators of achievement and assess their achievement of expected results was not correctly identified.[13] In addition, in the statements of results, in which programmes describe the achievement of their expected accomplishments, only 44 to 85 per cent of the indicators of achievement were referred to as yardsticks.[14] Thus, in 15 to 56 per cent of cases, the reporting by programmes on their achievement of expected accomplishments did not make reference to the gauge that the General Assembly had established. The evaluatory system developed was not fully used as intended.

50. Focal point survey responses listed data-related difficulties among the three biggest obstacles their programmes faced in managing and conducting self-evaluations in 2008-2009. Obstacles included:

(a) Data inconsistency, unavailability and unreliability;

(b) Difficulty in getting adequate responses;

[11] See, for example, inspection reports on monitoring and evaluation in UNCTAD (IED-10-010, paras. 27 and 28); the Department of Safety and Security (IED-11-001, para. 45); and ECA (IED-09-005, para. 27).

[12] Accuracy was measured at 90 per cent and more, except in the inspections of monitoring and evaluation at the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and ECA, where a different methodology led to lower values.

[13] See inspection reports on monitoring and evaluation in UNCTAD (IED-10-010, para. 17) and Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Department of Field Support (IED-10-001, para. 17).

[14] See inspection reports on monitoring and evaluation in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Department of Field Support (IED-10-001, para. 15) and the Department of Safety and Security (IED-11-001, fig. 2).

(c) Inability to easily access/extract data from disparate systems;

(d) Inadequate tools to collect meaningful data.

51. A programme's evaluation culture can present another obstacle. Focal points specifically identified the following challenges:

(a) Resistance from colleagues to evaluation activities;

(b) Resistance of management;

(c) Overcoming fear of evaluations among the programme managers;

(d) Lack of commitment by senior management for self-evaluation;

(e) Senior management's complete lack of support and ignorance;

(f) Unwillingness of senior managers to address difficult structural issues;

(g) Programme and project manager indifference.

52. Lastly, features of the evaluation function itself presented obstacles for conducting and managing self-evaluations. Those mentioned by focal points included:

(a) No full-time evaluation function;

(b) Lack of a designated evaluation office;

(c) Lack of dedicated capacity for self-evaluation;

(d) Lack of an evaluation policy;

(e) Lack of independence and lack of impartiality;

(f) Constant reliance on outside evaluation;

(g) Challenges to putting in place dedicated policies and procedures for evaluation;

(h) Lack of practical guidelines.

Evaluation policies and stand-alone evaluation units strengthen programme-level evaluation functions

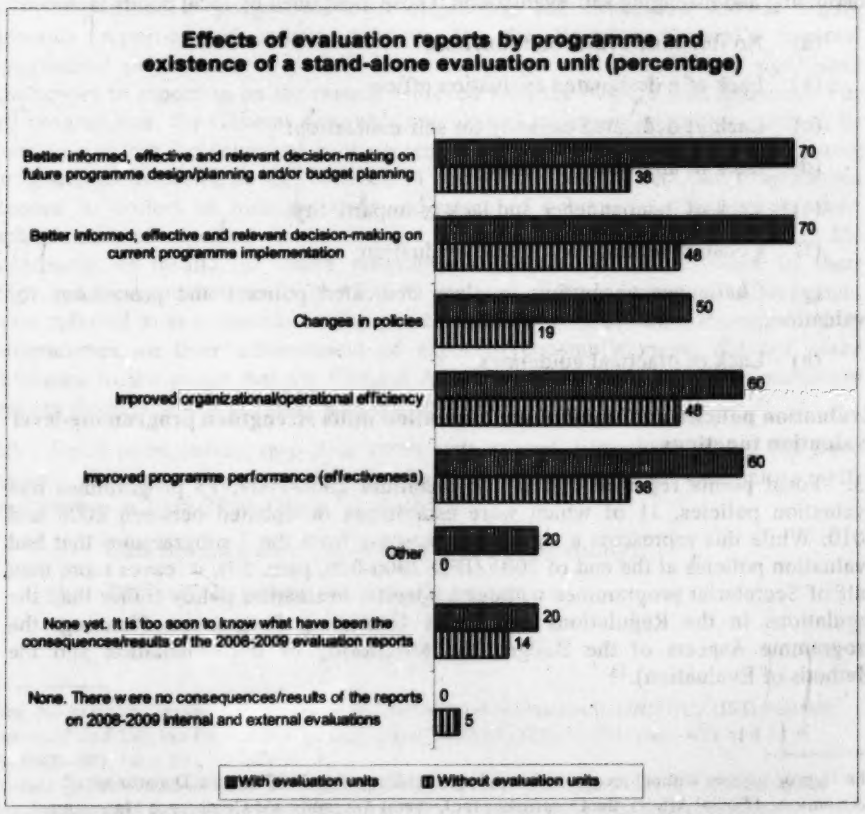
53. Focal points reported that in the biennium 2008-2009, 15 programmes had evaluation policies, 11 of which were established or updated between 2008 and 2010. While this represents a significant increase from the 7 programmes that had evaluation policies at the end of 2006 (IED-2006-006, para. 59), it leaves more than half of Secretariat programmes without a specific evaluation policy (other than the regulations in the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation).[15]

[15] The 16 programmes without an evaluation policy as at December 2009 are: the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, the Department of Management, the Department of Public Information, the Department of Safety and Security, ECA, ECE (adopted evaluation policy in 2010), the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, the Office of Legal Affairs, the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, UNCTAD,. UN-Habitat, the United Nations Office at Geneva and the United Nations Office at Vienna.

54. To assure the independence of the evaluation function, the United Nations Evaluation Group recommends a stand-alone evaluation unit. Ten focal points reported that their programmes had a stand-alone evaluation unit or office, dedicated solely to evaluation work.[16] Though the United Nations Evaluation Group recommends that evaluation managers report directly to the heads of respective departments, only half of the stand-alone evaluation units have such a structure. In departments lacking stand-alone evaluation units, evaluation is tasked to the operative units and usually coordinated by the office of the head of department.

55. Figure VI shows focal points' descriptions of results from evaluation reports produced by programmes in 2008-2009 and whether the programme had a stand-alone evaluation unit. Beneficial consequences of evaluation reports are more likely in programmes with stand-alone evaluation units. The difference is particularly striking with respect to changes in policies, which are reported by 50 per cent of programmes with evaluation units, but only 19 per cent of programmes without.

Figure VI

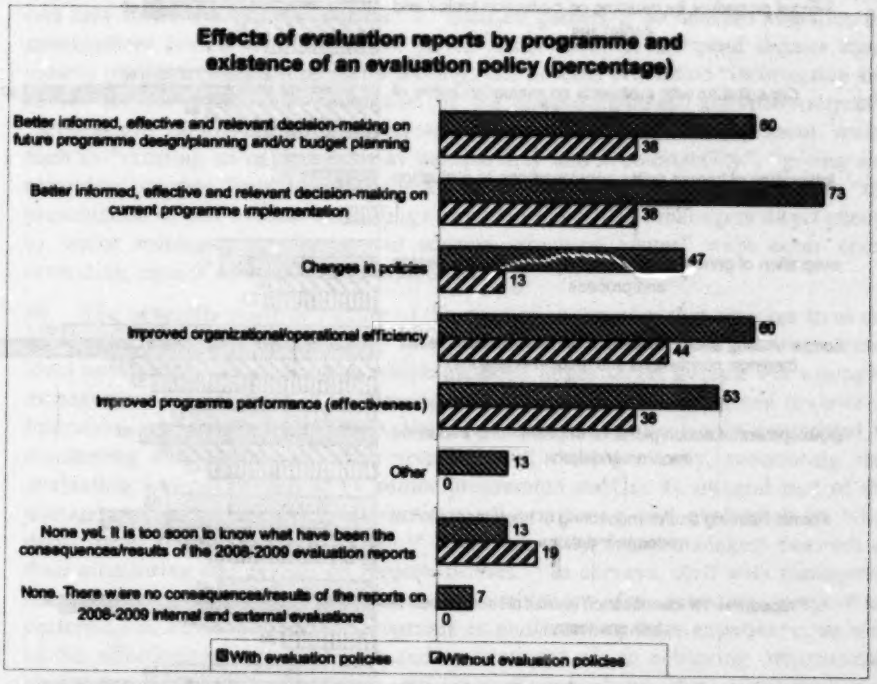


Source: OIOS programme focal points survey.

[16] The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support, the Department of Public Information, ECE, the International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO (ITC), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNEP, UNHCR, UN-Habitat and OIOS.

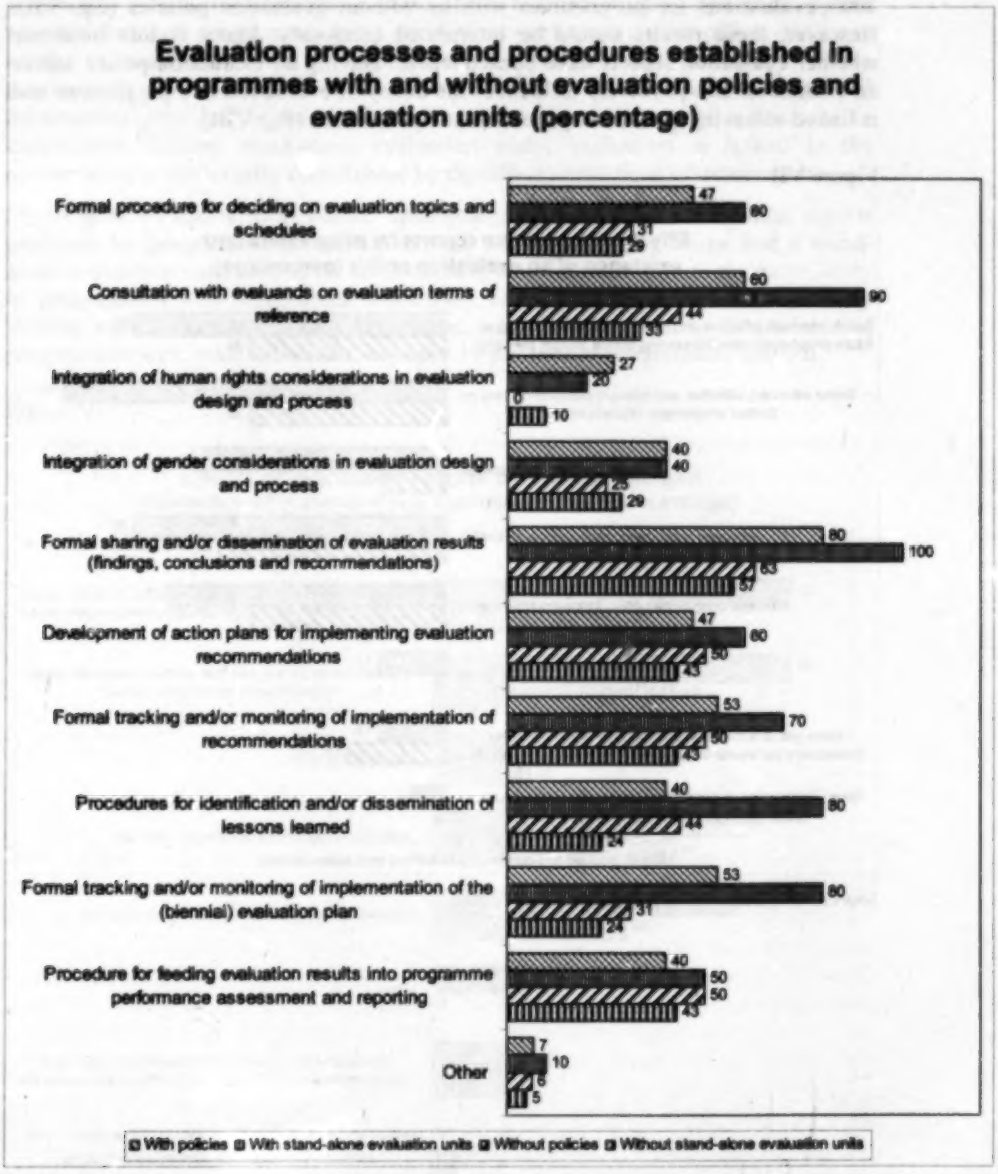
56. A similar effect is observed when comparing reported consequences of 2008-2009 evaluations for programmes with or without evaluation policies (fig. VII). However, these results should be interpreted cautiously. Many factors influence whether evaluation reports have consequences. Having an evaluation policy and/or an evaluation unit positively influences the utility of evaluation in a programme and is linked to having evaluation processes and procedures (fig. VIII).

Figure VII



Source: OIOS survey of programme focal points.

Figure VIII



Source: OIOS survey of programme focal points.

57. Lastly, having an evaluation policy positively affected overall evaluation quality, while having a stand-alone evaluation unit did not. While the average score of all evaluation reports in the quality assessment was 2.62 (between "good" and "fair"), reports from programmes with stand-alone evaluation units averaged 2.55 and those from programmes with evaluation policies averaged 2.33 (excellent = 1 and very poor = 5). While the first result is not statistically significant, the second

one is. That is, the quality of evaluation reports is significantly better in programmes with evaluation policies.

Evaluation has yet to become a fully accepted management function

58. When asked to name the three most rewarding aspects of managing and/or conducting evaluations in 2008-2009, approximately half of the focal points mentioned factors related to evaluation itself (e.g., it provides an "opportunity to engage in a participatory, collective lessons-learned exercise on how things work and how to do them better", or that it "focused gathering of relevant statistics for management review and evaluation"). The other focal points cited themes more closely related to programme activities (e.g., the process is deemed "informative and useful for the successful completion of the subprogrammes' activities/outputs", "programme improvement" and "cross-section coherence"). Management issues such as "creating an environment of transparency and accountability", "giving and receiving genuine feedback on programme management" and the fact that "the presentation of self-evaluation findings provided lower level managers direct access to senior managers to discuss and address structural issues" were other noted rewarding aspects of undertaking evaluations.

59. The generally positive picture of the evaluation function that emerges from the focal point survey is tempered by results from OIOS inspections of programme-level monitoring and evaluation, which included larger target groups. For example, management commitment to monitoring and evaluation received mixed reviews in interviews with staff at UNCTAD. Staff felt that management only committed to monitoring and evaluation when required and that, generally, monitoring and evaluation was not perceived by senior programme staff as an integral part of the management culture.[17] OIOS inspections of monitoring and evaluation in other departments revealed similar results.[18] OIOS has often found managers unaware of their monitoring and evaluation responsibilities.[19] In surveys, staff with managerial responsibilities rated the usefulness of evaluations for assessing programme performance, developing future programmes and learning from experience, as well as the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation tools in achieving departmental goals, lower than non-managers did.[20] Staff considered that monitoring and evaluation was frequently not managed effectively, and consequently staff regarded it as more of an administrative exercise of little value to their work.[21] The inspections have concluded that full implementation of a comprehensive self-evaluation agenda requires strong commitment from staff at all managerial levels.

[17] See inspection reports on monitoring and evaluation in UNCTAD (IED-10-010, paras. 28 and 42).

[18] See inspection reports on monitoring and evaluation in ECA (IED-09-005, para. 26) and the Department of Management (IED-10-002, para. 23).

[19] See inspection reports on monitoring and evaluation in Department of Safety and Security (IED-draft, para. 40).

[20] Based on the inspection report on monitoring and evaluation in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Department of Field Support (IED-10-001, annex VI and fig. 6).

[21] Ibid., para. 52.

F. Evaluation activities and workplan of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

60. To establish evaluation priorities, OIOS utilizes a systematic, strategic risk-based planning approach, incorporating 12 proxy risk indicators, that was introduced in 2007. The previous biennial report (A/64/63) presented the approach in detail.

61. In 2008-2009, OIOS completed the following evaluations (resulting in 11 reports):

(a) In-depth evaluation of political affairs;

(b) In-depth evaluation of the Office of Human Resources Management;

(c) Programme evaluation of OHCHR;

(d) Programme evaluation of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa;

(e) Thematic evaluation of lessons learned;

(f) Thematic evaluation of Secretariat environmental work;

(g) Thematic evaluation of United Nations coordinating bodies;

(h) Programme evaluation of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI);

(i) Thematic evaluation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in peacekeeping operations;

(j) Ad hoc evaluation of the Peacebuilding Fund;

(k) Ad hoc evaluation of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management integrated global management initiative.

62. In 2010-2011, OIOS will have completed 26 evaluation reports covering the following 9 topics:

(a) Programme evaluation of UNRWA;

(b) Programme evaluation of the Department of Management (two summary and six office reports were completed — the Office of the Under-Secretary-General, the Office of Central Support Services, the Office for Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts, the United Nations Office at Geneva, the United Nations Office at Vienna and the United Nations Office at Nairobi);

(c) Programme evaluation of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (1 summary and 10 subprogramme reports);

(d) Thematic evaluation of gender mainstreaming in the United Nations Secretariat;

(e) Thematic evaluation of United Nations Secretariat business partnerships addressing climate change;

(f) Programme evaluation of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL);

(g) Programme evaluation of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH);

(h) Programme evaluation of the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS);

(i) Thematic evaluation of Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Department of Field Support cooperation with regional organizations.

63. The General Assembly, in its resolution 64/229, endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination on evaluation, as contained in its report on the work of its forty-ninth session (A/64/16, chap. II.B). The Committee selected the programme evaluation of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs for consideration at its fifty-first session in 2011, and the thematic evaluation of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support cooperation with regional organizations for consideration by the relevant intergovernmental body (ibid., para. 41).

64. Assuming a continuation of current resource levels, OIOS will continue with its programme evaluation cycle of 11-13 years for evaluation of all Secretariat programmes. Table 1 presents a plan for evaluating Departments on a 12-year cycle.

Table 1
OIOS 12-year cycle of programme evaluations

Programme (ranked via Inspection and Evaluation Division risk assessment)	*Year evaluation completed or planned (planned evaluations in italics)*
1. Department of Peacekeeping Operations	Ongoing with Support Account
2. Department of Field Support	Ongoing with Support Account
3. OHCHR	2009
4. UNEP	*2013*
5. UNHCR	*2012*
6. Department of Management (including the United Nations Office at Geneva, the United Nations Office at Nairobi and the United Nations Office at Vienna)	2010
7. OCHA	*2012*
8. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime	*2013*
9. ECA	*2014*
10. UNRWA	2010
11. Department of Political Affairs	2008
12. UN-Habitat	*2014*
13. UNCTAD	*2014*

Programme (ranked via Inspection and Evaluation Division risk assessment)	*Year evaluation completed or planned (planned evaluations in italics)*
14. Department of Economic and Social Affairs	2011
15. Department for General Assembly and Conference Management	*2015*
16. Department of Safety and Security	*2015*
17. Office for Disarmament Affairs	*2015*
18. Executive Office of the Secretary-General	*2016*
19. ESCAP	*2016*
20. Department of Public Information	*2017*
21. ITC	*2017*
22. ECLAC	*2018*
23. Office of the Special Adviser on Africa/ New Partnership for Africa's Development	2009
24. Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States	2009
25. Office for Outer Space Affairs	*2017*
26. ECE	*2018*
27. Office of Legal Affairs	*2019*
28. ESCWA	*2019*

65. By the end of the current biennium, OIOS will have completed programme evaluations of the Department of Political Affairs, the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, UNRWA, OHCHR, the Department of Management and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. For 2012-2013, OIOS plans to complete programme evaluations of UNHCR, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNEP and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. To achieve its goal of an 11-13 year evaluation cycle for all Secretariat programmes, OIOS will strive to complete the remaining 13 evaluations over the following six years. In addition, to monitor follow-up of recommendations endorsed by the Committee for Programme and Coordination, OIOS will continue its mandated programme of triennial reviews.

66. With respect to evaluating peacekeeping operations (funded by the Support Account), in 2008-09, for the first time, OIOS conducted "whole of mission" evaluations, starting with UNOCI in 2009. In 2010, the Inspection and Evaluation

Division completed evaluations of MINUSTAH and UNMIL, and in 2011, UNMIS. For 2012, OIOS plans evaluations of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and either the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT) or a re-evaluation of MINUSTAH to better understand how disaster impacts a mission and how its impacts might be mitigated. Given the current number of peacekeeping missions (14), another four years is needed to evaluate the remaining missions, at current resource levels.

67. In 2009, the Inspection and Evaluation Division initiated a series of monitoring and evaluation inspections to inspect and validate programme performance report data and assess the quality of programmes' self-evaluation as a means of monitoring and informing the Secretary-General and Member States concerning the reliability of programmes' reported results and their capacity for learning and improving.

68. Since 2009, OIOS has conducted on average three monitoring and evaluation inspections a year. Since the methodological approach and the capacity to conduct these inspections have now been developed, OIOS plans to achieve greater efficiency in their conduct, striving for an average of five to six inspections a year. OIOS aims to complete monitoring and evaluation inspection coverage of all programmes by 2014, effectively a six-year cycle, which is longer than the goal of a four-year cycle (see table 2).

Table 2
Office of Internal Oversight Services monitoring and evaluation inspections

Programmes (ranked via Inspection and Evaluation Division risk assessment)	*Year monitoring and evaluation inspections completed or planned (planned inspections in italics)*
1. Department of Peacekeeping Operations/ Department of Field Support	2010
2. OHCHR	2011
3. UNEP	2011
4. UNHCR	*2013*
5. Department of Management (including the United Nations Office at Geneva, the United Nations Office at Nairobi and the United Nations Office at Vienna)	2010
6. OCHA	2011
7. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime	2009
8. ECA	2009
9. UNRWA	*2011*
10. Department of Political Affairs	*2012*
11. UN-Habitat	*2012*

Programmes (ranked via Inspection and Evaluation Division risk assessment)	*Year monitoring and evaluation inspections completed or planned (planned inspections in italics)*
12. UNCTAD	2010
13. Department of Economic and Social Affairs	2009
14. Department for General Assembly and Conference Management	*2012*
15. Department of Safety and Security	2011
16. Office for Disarmament Affairs	*2012*
17. Executive Office of the Secretary-General	*2012*
18. ESCAP	*2013*
19. Department of Public Information	*2013*
20. ITC	*2013*
21. ECLAC	*2013*
22. United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa/New Partnership for Africa's Development	*2014*
23. Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States	*2014*
24. Office for Outer Space Affairs	*2014*
25. ECE	*2014*
26. Office of Legal Affairs	*2014*
27. ESCWA	*2014*

69. In addition to this now standardized programme of monitoring and evaluation inspections, OIOS conducts ad hoc inspections in response to identified risks. In 2009, OIOS conducted an inspection of the human resources and management practices of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

Selection of evaluation topics for consideration by the Committee for Programme and Coordination

70. The Committee for Programme and Coordination may wish to consider which evaluations from the OIOS 2012-2013 workplan it would like to review at its fifty-third session, in 2013, and request OIOS to undertake any additional evaluations not currently on its workplan. The 2012-2013 programme evaluations are of UNHCR, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNEP and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. In addition to these programme evaluations, the Committee for Programme and Coordination may wish to consider the planned

thematic evaluation of the internal justice system of the United Nations Secretariat, a topic selected through OIOS strategic risk assessment.

Follow-up on the recommended actions of the Committee for Programme and Coordination

71. At its forty-ninth session, the Committee for Programme and Coordination recommended that OIOS continue to improve and refine the methodology for conducting its evaluations in order to draw more meaningful inferences and conclusions (A/64/16, para. 43). OIOS addressed this recommendation through the following five actions:

(a) It provided substantive training in evaluation methodologies for OIOS staff: training workshops on focus groups, interviewing skills, qualitative data analysis, and statistical analysis software programmes; a seminar series covering various topics including impact evaluation; and lectures on evaluation design and programme logic models and theory. Some staff also attended evaluation training provided by the Evaluator's Institute, an organization dedicated to professional skills enhancement in evaluation;

(b) It introduced the evaluation of peacekeeping missions in their entirety, with the programme evaluations on UNOCI, UNMIL, MINUSTAH and UNMIS;

(c) It developed and improved a local population survey component for programme evaluations where applicable, which was used in the evaluations of UNOCI, UNMIL, MINUSTAH, OHCHR and UNRWA;

(d) In 2008, OIOS requested an external peer assessment of the independence, credibility and utility of its evaluation work. Conducted under the auspices of the United Nations Evaluation Group and in collaboration with the Development Assistance Committee Network on Development Evaluation, the peer review reported strong positive findings on OIOS independence and overall satisfaction with the credibility of its work. The review recommended, inter alia, that OIOS implement a broader sharing of evaluations to increase their utility, particularly for learning purposes;

(e) In 2009, OIOS conducted an assessment of the quality of OIOS reports completed during the biennium 2008-2009, through both a stakeholder survey and an independent review conducted by an external consultant (see para. 6, footnote 4). The expert found that 75 per cent of the Division's evaluation reports and 43 per cent of its inspection reports were of "good" quality. None of the reports examined were rated below "fair" quality. Recommendations and findings were found to be the strongest sections of the Division's reports, while the methodology, annexes and conclusions could be improved.

72. The Committee also recommended that OIOS draw the attention of the various secretariats to the imperative of impact assessment and in-depth evaluation of their programmes in accordance with extant rules and regulations (A/64/16, para. 44). OIOS addressed this recommendation as follows:

(a) It informed all Secretariat evaluation focal points of this recommendation;

(b) It participated in the United Nations Evaluation Group Impact Evaluation Task Force, which developed a concept note on impact evaluation in the United

Nations. OIOS shared this with all Secretariat evaluation focal points. Furthermore, through the Task Force, OIOS will participate in developing an impact evaluation guidance document specifically tailored to the United Nations system;

(c) It discussed impact evaluation and its uses as part of self-evaluation guidance provided to programmes including the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, ESCWA, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Department of Political Affairs.

IV. Conclusion

73. The overall picture of the role and status of evaluation in the Secretariat is mixed. While more programmes have adopted evaluation policies and established evaluation processes and procedures, and evaluation has been more evenly spread throughout the Secretariat, the increase in resources observed in 2008-2009 was not maintained in 2010-2011. Monitoring and evaluation resources available, given the Organization's size and complexity, fall well below the lower threshold (1 per cent of total budget) commonly recommended.

74. Information from evaluations is used for a variety of important purposes, though evaluation has yet to become a fully accepted management function. Most frequently cited by programme focal points was "improvement of the current programme" followed by "learning for future programmes and/or budget planning", and "reporting to higher levels of management and to intergovernmental bodies". Nearly half of the programmes reported using evaluation information in policy decisions, and focal points provided numerous specific examples of how they had used such information to improve operations.

75. Support for evaluation is lower among staff at managerial levels than among staff at large, perhaps a consequence that evaluation is often not a formal part of managers' responsibilities. The decision to delete the expected accomplishment "effective self-evaluation of all programmes and subprogrammes on a regular basis" and the target "self-evaluation plans implemented" from the 2010 senior managers' compacts with the Secretary-General may have been counterproductive.

76. According to the United Nations Evaluation Group, an independent and impartial evaluation process is facilitated when the evaluation function is independent of other management functions; the Head of evaluation should report directly to the governing body of the organization or the head of the organization.[22] Across programmes, this often is not the case. Further, many programmes still do not have evaluation policies or independent units.

77. While on average the quality of evaluation reports is satisfactory and high-quality reports can be found in different parts of the Secretariat, quality varies considerably between and even within departments. OIOS proposes a knowledge management initiative to address some of the capacity gaps that have become evident in the course of this review. Examining the quality of reports that exist, however, does not address the issue of whether the evaluations addressed the most pertinent topics.

[22] United Nations Evaluation Group, "Standards for Evaluation in the United Nations System", p. 4 (2005).

78. In order to build the Secretariat's evaluation capacity, it is important that trained, high-quality evaluators be available to provide assistance to programmes and subprogrammes in identifying relevant evaluation topics and assure that self-evaluations provide results that lead to improvement in the implementation of initiatives and/or in the theory of change that surrounds initiatives.

V. Actions to strengthen the quality of evaluation reports

79. To support improvement in the quality of evaluation reports, OIOS will:

(a) Share with the respective departments detailed quality assessments for their reports in the sample;

(b) Provide departments with a "light", simple template for a typical evaluation report, which programmes could use on a voluntary basis. The template could include, for example, a standardized table of contents and a checklist, with key features for each chapter or section;

(c) Prepare elements of a high-quality evaluation report as an example, annotated with descriptions of high-quality elements. Such elements could include:

(i) A description of the characteristics of report elements;

(ii) A notation of the strengths of the methodology section;

(iii) Well-phrased findings, conclusions and recommendations;

(iv) Examples of how to present evidence;

(v) Examples of how to integrate gender and human rights considerations.

VI. Question for consideration by the Committee for Programme and Coordination

80. OIOS also offers the following question for consideration by the Committee for Programme and Coordination, in line with General Assembly resolution 59/275, by which the Assembly endorsed the request of the Committee that OIOS raise "questions in which intergovernmental guidance and follow-up, by the Committee or other appropriate intergovernmental bodies, would be useful" (A/59/16, para. 383).

81. Rule 107.2 of the PPBME states, inter alia, that "methodological support shall be provided by the Central Evaluation Unit in connection with the preparation of self-evaluation reports" and Rule 107.3 states that "self-evaluation shall be conducted by programme managers in compliance with guidelines established by the Central Evaluation Unit, which will be responsible for quality standards, methodology, the adaptation and transfer of evaluation information and ad hoc studies".

82. Following on General Assembly resolution 64/259 which deals, inter alia, with implementation of the results-based management framework (A/64/640), OIOS notes that neither OIOS nor the Department of Management have included this function in their 2012-2013 strategic framework, and there is no longer any indicator of achievement reflecting the function of capacity development for self-evaluation within any department's 2012-2013 strategic framework.

83. Clarification is needed on how the provisions of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation with respect to building the capacity for self-evaluation within the Secretariat are to be fulfilled in 2012-2013. In this connection, OIOS notes that self-evaluation will be discussed further in the context of the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 64/259 on accountability during the main part of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly. Deliberations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination on this issue could help inform this discussion.

(*Signed*) Carman L. **Lapointe**
Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services

28 March 2011

Annex I

List of departments/offices included in biennial study and the number of 2008-2009 evaluation reports

	Department/Office	*No. of reports*
1.	Department of Economic and Social Affairs	2
2.	Department for General Assembly and Conference Management	1
3.	Department of Management	1
4.	Department of Political Affairs	2
5.	Department of Public Information	10
6.	Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Department of Field Support	7
7.	Department of Safety and Security	0
8.	Economic Commission for Africa	20
9.	Economic Commission for Europe	13
10.	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean	7
11.	Executive Office of the Secretary-General	0
12.	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific	11
13.	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia	4
14.	International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO	9
15.	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs	5
16.	Office for Disarmament Affairs	0
17.	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights	1
18.	Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States	0
19.	Office of Legal Affairs	4
20.	Office for Outer Space Affairs	1
21.	Office of the Special Adviser on Africa	1
22.	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development	5
23.	United Nations Environment Programme	8
24.	United Nations Human Settlements Programme	5
25.	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	11
26.	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime	16
27.	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East	9
28.	United Nations Office at Geneva	2
29.	United Nations Office at Nairobi	0
30.	United Nations Office at Vienna	0
	Total	**155**
31.	Office of Internal Oversight Services	11

Annex II

Quality assessment results

No.	Assessment standard	Rating[a] 1	2	3	4	5	No. of ratings	Average
	Executive summary							
1	The executive summary contains the key elements of the report, in particular subject and objectives of the evaluation, methodology including limitations, main findings, conclusions and recommendations	6	15	11	2	11	45	2.93
	Introduction							
2	The report states when the evaluation was conducted (period of the evaluation)[b]	29				16	45	
3	The report states by whom the evaluation was conducted[c]	38				7	45	
	Introduction overall	5	23	11	6	0	45	2.40
4	The report is clear in specifying the subject of the evaluation	17	19	5	2	2	45	1.96
5	The report is clear in specifying the purpose and the objectives of the evaluation	8	27	9	0	1	45	2.09
6	The report is clear in specifying what the evaluation covers and what it does not (scope of the evaluation)	7	18	11	7	2	45	2.53
7	The report is clear in specifying the key evaluation questions and criteria	7	19	10	7	2	45	2.51
	Methodology overall	8	19	13	3	2	45	2.38
8	Overall, the methodology explains in a convincing manner how the evaluation arrived at the findings	9	18	13	3	2	45	2.36
9	The methodology describes data sources, data collection and analysis methods	7	20	13	3	2	45	2.40
10	The methodology addresses methodological challenges and/or limitations as well as the reliability and validity of the findings	10	9	8	13	5	45	2.87
	Background							
11	The report provides enough background information so that the context within which the subject of the evaluation operated can be understood (without being too excessive)	12	15	10	5	3	45	2.38
	Findings overall	8	14	18	4	0	44	2.41
12	The findings clearly relate to the evaluation subject and objectives	18	19	5	3	0	45	1.84
13	The findings are supported by sufficient evidence	16	13	9	7	0	45	2.16
14	The findings are clearly stated (avoid ambiguities)	10	13	12	10	0	45	2.49
15	The findings are free from subjective judgments made by the evaluators (objective, based on evidence)	9	21	13	2	0	45	2.18
16	The findings explain why and how things happen/do not happen (reasons for accomplishments or difficulties, enabling and constraining factors)	8	17	11	9	0	45	2.47

No.	Assessment standard	Rating[a] 1	2	3	4	5	No. of ratings	Average
	Conclusions overall	6	9	13	10	7	45	3.07
17	The conclusions answer the big questions of the evaluation and focus on significant issues	7	12	7	12	7	45	3.00
18	The conclusions build on the findings (logical link)	10	13	8	7	7	45	2.73
19	The conclusions add value to the findings (avoid repeating findings)	4	7	13	14	7	45	3.29
20	The conclusions reflect the evaluators' view and judgment (it should be judgmental)	10	14	9	5	7	45	2.67
	Recommendations overall	7	12	15	7	4	45	2.76
21	The recommendations clearly and directly relate to the findings and conclusions	12	14	10	7	2	45	2.40
22	The recommendations are limited to a manageable number of key recommendations (avoid "laundry lists" of too prescriptive recommendations)	7	8	19	7	4	45	2.84
23	The recommendations are realistic/actionable	8	17	14	2	4	45	2.49
24	The report is clear in specifying who should implement the recommendations	12	7	11	10	5	45	2.76
	Format overall	9	16	13	7	0	45	2.40
25	The report is easy to read and understand (avoids complex language and unexplained acronyms)	10	21	10	4	0	45	2.18
26	The overall flow of the report is cohesive and logical	13	15	10	7	0	45	2.24
27	The report uses relevant tables and charts to illustrate important points and information	10	9	13	6	7	45	2.80
	Overall rating of reports	7	12	17	9	0	45	2.62

Note:

How to read the table

- The overall score in the table is the result of the aggregation of the individual ratings from the 45 assessment sheets; example "Methodology overall": the methodology part of 8 reports was rated excellent (1), the methodology part in 19 reports was rated good (2), etc.
- The "average" (last column to the right) is the only score which is not the result of the aggregation of individual ratings; it is a mathematical average calculated as follows: all scores multiplied by their ratings divided by the total number of ratings; example "executive summary": (6x1)+(15x2)+(11x3)+(2x4)+(11x5)/45=2.93.

[a] Rating scale: 1= excellent; 2 = good; 3 = fair; 4 = poor; 5 = very poor.

[b] Twenty-nine reports stated when the evaluation was conducted, and 16 did not.

[c] Thirty-eight reports stated who conducted the evaluation, and 7 did not.

Annex III

Comments received from Secretariat entities on the draft report[a]

Department of Management

Paragraph 44

OIOS refers in this paragraph to resources identified for monitoring and evaluation activities in the Secretariat in 2010-2011 as amounting to $49.9 million. The paragraph also makes references to the increase of $5.2 million in 2010-2011. The Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts wishes to draw the attention of OIOS to the introduction of the report of the Secretary-General on the proposed programme budget for 2010-2011 (A/64/6 (Introduction)), paragraph 61 of which indicates that resources totalling $48.8 million, reflecting an increase of roughly $4.0 million over the estimates for the biennium 2008-2009, were identified for monitoring and evaluation. OIOS may wish to take note of what has been reported in the Secretary-General's report.

Paragraph 64

The paragraph reads:

> "In consideration of its resources, OIOS proposes a ten-year cycle of programme evaluations for all Secretariat programmes, subject to approval of modest resource increases proposed in its 2012-2013 budget proposal."

The Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts notes that in respect of the reduction of the programme evaluation cycle to 10 years, as discussed during the programme manager review meeting on 7 February 2011 between the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts and OIOS on the 2012-2013 budget proposals, there are no additional resources proposed under the regular budget in support of the reduced cycle, as the majority of the programmes planned for evaluation (i.e., UNHCR, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNEP, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and ECA) were largely funded from extrabudgetary resources. Accordingly, and consistent with General Assembly resolution 50/7, OIOS intends to pursue the funding of such evaluations from the extrabudgetary resources of the specific programme. In this respect, OIOS may wish to clarify the funding aspects of the resources in the above paragraph.

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[a] The Office of Internal Oversight Services herewith presents the full text of comments received from the Department of Management, ESCWA, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office for Disarmament Affairs, OHCHR, UNEP, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Office at Geneva and UNRWA on the draft biennial report on strengthening the role of evaluation and the application of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives. The inclusion of this information is in line with General Assembly resolution 64/263, following the recommendation of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee. Overall, the entities that submitted comments concurred with the findings and conclusions of OIOS. The comments on the draft OIOS report have been incorporated, as appropriate, into the final report. As a result, in some instances, the paragraph numbers referred to in the comments received from the Secretariat entities do not correspond to the paragraph numbers in the final report.

OIOS might wish to add "self-" before "evaluation" when referring to self-evaluation activities carried out by programme managers in the Secretariat to avoid confusion with central evaluation, which is OIOS' responsibility (see section III.E, Overview of Secretariat programme-level evaluation practice and capacity, and sect. V, Actions to strengthen the quality of evaluation reports. For example, add "self-" before "evaluation" in the headings before paragraphs 43, 47 and 49 and, to avoid confusion, in the last sentence of paragraph 78.

Suggested text for paragraph 85

"In this connection, OIOS notes that self-evaluation will be further discussed in the context of the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 64/259 on accountability during the main part of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly."

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

ESCWA would like to raise the following issues with you for your consideration:

(a) In reference to figure 4, we believe that the suggested percentage of evaluation resources in the budget of ESCWA as 4.43 per cent is most probably an error. Based on discussions with your office, we would like to formally request that this be reviewed, as our calculations indicate that the proportion is similar to that for the biennium 2008-2009, or around 0.69 per cent;

(b) With reference to paragraph 54, and noting that 10 departments have a stand-alone or independent evaluation function, it would be appreciated to note these by entity in the footnote.

We look forward to reading the final report.

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

Thank you for sharing the draft report on strengthening the role of evaluation and the application of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives. There are a few factual clarifications that the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs would like to make:

On page 6, paragraph 10, the report states that the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs only conducted internal evaluations in 2008 and 2009. Although this could be attributed to a difference in terminology concerning what is considered internal, the Office considers that all evaluations conducted in 2008 and 2009 (including inter-agency real-time evaluations and the Central Emergency Response Fund evaluation) were external evaluations, in that they were externally mandated and carried out by external (as opposed to internal) consultants.

On page 10, paragraph 27, the report states that the evaluation by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of its response to Cyclone Nargis found that "the cluster approach made coordination inefficient and the services offered sometimes redundant". This is incorrect and the evaluation report did not state that. In the key findings of the inter-agency real-time evaluation of Cyclone

Nargis[b] coordination was found to be relatively good at the central level, but there were weaknesses in terms of linking clusters with their counterparts in the field, outreach to beneficiaries and inter-cluster planning and coordination.

We would therefore strongly suggest replacing the sentence "the cluster approach made coordination inefficient and the services offered sometimes redundant" with "Coordination was relatively good at the central level, but there were weaknesses in terms of linking clusters with their counterparts in the field, outreach to beneficiaries and inter-cluster planning and coordination".

On page 16, the report currently states that for 2010-2011 the proportion of evaluation resources to total programme resources of the Office is .41 per cent (fig. IV). We are not sure how this figure was calculated (perhaps this only reflects the Office's portion of the regular budget allocated to evaluation?). However, in 2010 the Office spent approximately 1 per cent on evaluations, mainly through extrabudgetary contributions. The data in the report therefore incorrectly shows that the spending of the Office on evaluations went down significantly from the 2008-2009 period. Although the report states that these figures were based on an analysis of the budget fascicles for 2010-2011, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs would appreciate further clarification on how OIOS determined these figures.

Office for Disarmament Affairs

The Office for Disarmament Affairs is of the view that, since the Office's self-evaluation reports are not included in annex I of the draft report (since they do not fall within the time frame covered by it), it would be incongruent to make a reference to the self-evaluation exercise's findings on page 14 of said report. Therefore, and for consistency purposes, the Office would prefer the omission of this reference.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has reviewed with great interest the draft report of OIOS on strengthening the role of evaluation and the application of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives. In reply to the request for feedback, kindly note that OHCHR does not have any particular comments at this stage. We look forward to receiving the final report.

United Nations Environment Programme

The intent of the document is to provide an overview of key aspects of evaluation activities within the United Nations Secretariat, and it has a high potential utility for evaluation functions and as a means of reporting to the General Assembly. The report is clear and easy to read but needs to take into consideration

[b] Attached evaluation report deleted by OIOS is available at: http://ochanet.unocha.org/p/Documents/Final%20report%20of%20the%20Inter_Agency%20Real-Time%20Evaluation%20of%20the%20Humanitarian%20Response%20to%20the%20Pakistan%20Floods.pdf.

the following points to improve its quality and effectiveness in providing feedback to its intended target audiences:

(a) The methods section provides limited information with respect to the stated intent of "providing a summary of key findings, conclusions and recommendation of evaluation reports". The strategic context is lacking. What parameters/criteria define what is of interest in terms of general findings, conclusions and recommendations from the reports considered? What guides the selection of summary findings in relation to the strategic context needs to be clearly stated;

(b) Following the above point, the topic headings for the summary findings do not have a clear rationale. The generic relevance, at the Secretariat level, of the specific findings presented from selected evaluations under each topic is equally unclear. The reader is not provided with a clear picture of what the selected findings imply for the work of the Secretariat;

(c) Section III, paragraph 13, notes that most evaluations are at a level below department or programme. This is unsurprising, as evaluation resources are often built into project activities by default. One would also expect this pattern, since the absolute number of projects is far higher (of necessity) than the number of programmes/departments. The key point is whether adequate resources/effort are allocated to evaluations of strategic importance (which are often at a higher level);

(d) Paragraph 39 notes that many evaluations (55 per cent) do not make recommendations on policy directives. However, the report does not explore whether the occurrence of recommendations on policy directives is related to the type or level at which an evaluation is conducted. A priori, one might expect project-level evaluations to have a lower frequency of such recommendations and thus the relative frequency of project evaluations might explain this pattern;

(e) From a methods perspective, we do not know whether the pattern shown in figure II, for 71 projects, would hold for the total of 155 evaluation reports, or whether the distribution across evaluation types is altered by the selection criteria. Figure II would be more robust and informative if the full total of 155 were presented;

(f) The basis for calculating the monitoring and evaluation budget figures in section III.E, figure IV were not presented. What is included/excluded from such figures is not clear, and this makes the interpretation of the data problematic. The figures are presumably based on survey responses. If a respondent reports from an evaluation function, monitoring budgets might not be included, alternatively, if a respondent reports from a monitoring and evaluation function, budgets reported might cover both sets of activities. The methods used need to be clearly stated, and future studies should ensure that common standards are applied;

(g) As stated in paragraph 8 (a), we look forward to receiving feedback on the quality of UNEP evaluation reports as assessed by OIOS.

The recent comparative study from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)/Development Assistance Committee entitled "Evaluation in development agencies", which takes stock of how evaluation functions are managed and resourced, provides a useful model for consideration by OIOS in preparing future versions of this report.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

General comments

The report provides very interesting findings and conclusions, in particular as regards the acceptance of evaluation as a management function.

The report would benefit from having a more elaborated paragraph than that contained in section V on recommendations and actions. Although section V of the report identifies concrete actions, it focuses only on strengthening the quality of evaluation reports and not on how acceptance of evaluation as a management function can be created.

It is not clear how many evaluation reports per department/office/programme were actually reviewed. Annex I would benefit from having an additional column with the number of reports reviewed out of the number of 2008-2009 reports. This would clarify section III.B. on findings, conclusions and recommendations on the eight priority areas of the Organization. In the current report, it seems that only one evaluation of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime got reviewed — this may serve as an example, but does not reflect the evaluation portfolio of the Office.

Specific comments

As regards section V on actions to strengthen the quality of evaluation reports, please note that, in addition, the following ought to be taken into account:

(a) Improvement of common understanding of terminology: confusion was found between background information and evidence, evidence and findings, and findings and conclusion;

(b) Mainstreaming of gender and human rights in evaluation reports should be addressed.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime recommends, therefore, that paragraph 81 (b) mention that the template for evaluation reports include definitions and gender and human rights mainstreaming guidance.

Paragraph 42 lists all programmes except the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

Paragraph 75 mentions that "monitoring and evaluation resources [...] fall below the lower threshold commonly recommended". It would be useful to include information on how this threshold is defined. This information would help in building an institutional evaluation culture, which the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime is committed to.

United Nations Office at Geneva

On behalf of the Director-General of UNOG, I would like to thank you very much for sharing the draft report for our comments. In our view, the draft report provides a clear picture of the evaluation activities throughout the Secretariat and pinpoints the key issues which would be necessary to further strengthen the role of evaluation. We welcome in particular the questions addressed to the Committee for Programme and Coordination.

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

UNRWA has reviewed the draft report and would like to commend OIOS for the comprehensive and clear analysis of evaluation activities in the United Nations system. UNRWA agrees with and appreciates the draft.